

## Mission

It is our mission to provide a well-trained, highly effective Guardian ad Litem to advocate for the best interests of *every* abused, neglected and maltreated child who comes before Minnesota's Juvenile and Family Courts, to ensure that each child obtains a safe, nurturing and permanent home as quickly as possible.



*"Even if you help only one child  
.... it makes it all worthwhile."*

*--Guardian ad Litem, Child Advocate*

*Image used by permission of National CASA*

## Contact Information

### *~ Local Program ~*

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### *~ State Program ~*

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Guardian ad Litem Program  
State Court Administrator's Office  
Court Services Division  
Minnesota Judicial Center  
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 215-9467

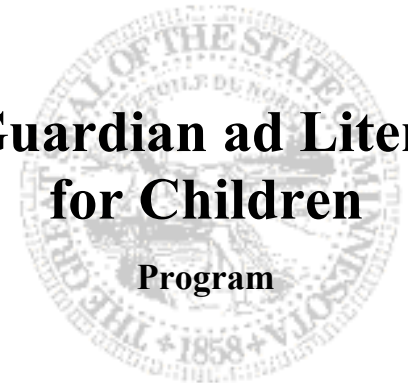
[www.courts.state.mn.us](http://www.courts.state.mn.us)

## Minnesota

### Judicial Branch

*General Informational Brochure  
For Families and Volunteers*

## Guardian ad Litem for Children Program



*"...in every case involving an abused or neglected  
child which results in a judicial proceeding,  
a Guardian ad Litem shall be appointed  
to represent the child."*

-- U.S. Congress  
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

### **What is a Guardian ad Litem?**

A Guardian ad Litem is an advocate for a child whose welfare is a matter of concern for the court. In legal terms, it means “guardian for the lawsuit.” When the court is making decisions that will affect a child's future, the child needs and deserves a spokesperson -- an objective adult to provide independent information about the best interests of the child. While other parties in the case are concerned about the child, the Guardian ad Litem is the only person in the case whose *sole* concern is the best interests of the child, and he or she is assigned as an advocate for the child for the duration of the court process.

Different from a legal guardian, the Guardian ad Litem has no control over the person or property of the child and does not provide a home for the child. The Guardian ad Litem does not function as the child's attorney and does not provide direct services to the child.

Guardians ad Litem in Minnesota include volunteers, independent contractors and state employees.



### **What does a Guardian ad Litem do?**

There are three primary functions:

1. Information-gathering for the court
    - What has happened to the child
    - Current circumstance and needs of the child
  2. Making recommendations to the court
    - What the child needs to be safe
    - What services and treatment plans should be ordered for the child and family
    - What permanent resolution is in the best interests of the child
  3. Advocating for speedy decisions that take into account the impact of delays and time on the child
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### **What is the role of the Guardian ad Litem in court?**

Based on their independent information gathering about the case, and their contact with the child and other people concerned, the Guardian ad Litem comes to court and makes recommendations to the judge that they think would be in the best interests of the child.

Guardian ad Litem input is one of several important pieces of information the judge uses in making an informed ruling on behalf of the child.

Guardians ad Litem need to be an independent voice that is not influenced by any other party's interests or position. A Guardian ad Litem who can tell the court “I was there -- this is what I observed” can be invaluable.

### **What kind of background and training do Guardians ad Litem have?**

Guardians ad Litem come from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds. A concern for children and a willingness to speak up for a child's best interests are important qualifications. Guardians ad Litem are responsible adults with good judgment and the common sense that comes with life experience.

All advocates are required to complete an intensive pre-service training program before receiving their first case assignment. There are continuing educational opportunities to enhance skills, and ongoing support and supervision are provided.



***“Justice for children cannot be sought, let alone achieved, if their voice is not represented in the hearings that determine their fate. Guardians ad Litem are that voice.”***

*--Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz  
Minnesota Supreme Court*

### **How can I learn more about the program?**

There are contacts listed on the back of this brochure. You can also find more program information by viewing the Guardian ad Litem Website at [www.courts.state.mn.us/gal/gal.htm](http://www.courts.state.mn.us/gal/gal.htm)